

Civic Leadership Academy – Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Civic Leadership Academy (CLA)?

The CLA is a 13-session crash course in the City of Charlotte Government and civic leadership. Participants can grow in their leadership style, learn to analyze issues using data, connect with decision-makers and other Charlotte leaders, and gain valuable tools to make a difference in their communities.

Who can participate?

Participation is open to residents of Charlotte, NC. Currently, we are not accepting applications from anyone outside the City's geographical boundaries.

Do I have to be an established leader to participate in the CLA?

Young people (16 and older), established neighborhood leaders, homeowners, renters, residents with no leadership experience, business owners, non-profit workers, new arrivals, native Charlotteans, and everyone in between are encouraged to apply. If you care about Charlotte and want to work with the City to improve your quality of life, we want you to join the CLA.

How and why was the CLA created?

The CLA was created to equip residents with the tools and information necessary to be strong, community-focused civic leaders. The CLA focuses on making the City government more accessible and transparent and engaging residents as partners in grappling with the challenges we face as a community. The program was created with input from grassroots community leaders and City staff to reflect the needs and concerns of the community. Because we are deeply committed to being responsive in providing information and tools that the community needs, each CLA program will vary slightly to accommodate the feedback from previous sessions and to reflect changing issues and concerns in our community.

How will participants be selected?

Up to 42 applicants will be selected, six from each City Council district area. Selection is based on the application content, with a focus on selecting applicants who reflect the rich diversity of our community and who demonstrate a willingness to engage as leaders in Charlotte. Selection is competitive, with over 200 applicants in most cycles. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to be as thoughtful, innovative, and engaging as possible in their applications.

Should I send additional information with my application?

Extra information, such as a resume, is unnecessary to include with the application and will not be considered in the application process.



What is the cost of participation?

The program is free. Meals and materials are included. Because the CLA represents a significant investment in each participant, we ask that potential participants attend sessions and consider the time commitment before applying.

Why should I participate?

The ideal CLA applicant applies because they love Charlotte and want to participate in problem-solving to move our community forward. Past participants in the CLA have been residents who wished to become community and/or neighborhood leaders, existing leaders who wanted to sharpen their skills, non-profit workers who wanted to better educate their constituents on how to work with government, and residents who desire to understand what the City does. Many CLA applicants are interested in applying for boards, commissions, and public service.

Participants of the CLA will:

- Receive a personalized DISC Leadership Assessment
- Learn how to utilize their leadership style to impact their community efficiently and positively
- Enhance their understanding of Charlotte's history and decision making
- Develop relationships with other community leaders and leaders in local government
- Learn how to use data to articulate challenges and advocate for resources for their communities
- Get a behind-the-scenes look at how the City of Charlotte works and develop specialized knowledge about the departments and programs of the City of Charlotte
- Commit to using their leadership skills in the broader community to improve the quality of life for all Charlotteans.

Program graduates are strongly encouraged to apply to serve on City/County boards and commissions. The official boards and commission applications include a designation for CLA graduates. CLA graduates will also receive a certificate of completion from Housing & Neighborhood Services and an exclusive CLA lapel pin.

When and where are the sessions held?

Sessions are on weeknights and Saturdays, with a mix of in-person and virtual formats. Most in-person sessions will be at City-owned facilities. Selected applicants will receive an official agenda detailing each session and location with their acceptance packet.

What information will the program cover?

The CLA covers the operations of the City of Charlotte, how to engage in purposeful leadership, how to use data, and the history of Charlotte. Participants will walk away with a high-level understanding of the City of Charlotte, specialized knowledge about the City's departments, and a better understanding of leadership concepts like emotional intelligence, equity, and collaboration and influence.



This program may touch on the work of Mecklenburg County, the State of North Carolina, and/or the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools system but is primarily focused on the workings of the City of Charlotte.

How often is the CLA offered?

The CLA holds two series annually- in March/April and September/October/November.

What are the attendance requirements?

Participants may miss up to three sessions out of 13 (not including graduation). Each session contains vital information, and participants are highly encouraged to attend each one.

What happens if I am not selected?

With many applications received, only some applicants can be selected. We will keep your information on file and let you know if a participant in your council district drops out and leaves a vacancy you can fill. We also encourage applicants to apply again for the next cycle. We will give you the first notice when applications are available.

We encourage applicants to attend other training opportunities the City of Charlotte offers.

Who should I contact for more information?

Please get in touch with Cynthia Woods at Cynthia.Woods@charlottenc.gov or 704-336-2646.

What happens after the program?

Graduates of the CLA can indicate their status on applications for boards and commissions. The City of Charlotte will formally convene CLA graduates in voluntary, bi-annual meetings to give updates about programs and projects of the City and help the City's problem solve, where applicable. Graduates will be included on the Neighborhood Organization Contact list. How graduates engage in individual community leadership is up to them. However, community involvement and leadership are conditions for participating in the program.

What makes a strong application?

Applicants are encouraged to be as thoughtful, innovative, and engaging as possible in their applications. A Selection Committee reviews applications; they are scored based on the following categories: Application Completeness, Engagement, Perspective & Innovation, Community Concern, and Demonstrated Potential for Leadership.

While we can't guarantee selection, we offer the following tips for your consideration:

Take your time – don't rush through the application.

Read full program details in advance – purpose, benefits, content, why participate, etc.

Review the entire application before you begin.

Follow the instructions, answer questions thoroughly.

Think through each question, giving thoughtful consideration, and provide your sincere, distinct response.

Before submitting, check to ensure your responses are clear and convey your intended meaning.